



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20460

FEB 6 2008

OFFICE OF
INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

Mr. Jeffrey N. Wennberg
Chair, U.S. Governmental Advisory Committee
Commissioner
VT Department of Environmental Conservation
103 South Main Street, Building 1 South
Waterbury, VT 05641-0401

Dear Mr. Wennberg:

On behalf of Administrator Stephen L. Johnson, I would like to thank you for the Governmental Advisory Committee's (GAC) advice of November 19, 2007 reporting on its October 2007 meeting. Your advice provided valuable recommendations to the United States regarding the Commission on Environmental Cooperation (CEC) and the important issues of communications, emerging trends, and the CEC Operational Plan. I was sorry that I could not join you in person, and pleased that Scott Fulton, the Acting Deputy Assistant Administrator for the Office of International Affairs, was able to attend.

As noted at your last meeting and in your advice, the project suggestions that you provided last spring were seriously considered, and in many cases, integrated into the CEC Operational Plan. We appreciated your input and continue to benefit from your useful advice.

We appreciate your recommendations on Visibility and Communications of the CEC. We agree that a targeted effort from the Secretariat would make CEC communications more effective. We also recognize that each Party, and the JPAC, have a role to play in this important endeavor. To that end, we will continue to look for opportunities to highlight success when the CEC accomplishes tangible results that benefit the environment in North America. Recognizing that the CEC is operating with an especially tight budget this year, we will bring your suggestions regarding a targeted communications plan, and the refilling of the CEC Communications Officer, to the General Standing Committee for their consideration in our next discussion. I am intrigued by the suggestions you made to provide valuable resources to local communities by creating a space to share and recognize success. When the time comes to design and implement the communications plan, I am sure that the suggestions in your letter will be a significant contribution.

Thank you for your good thinking and sound advice on CEC Emerging Trends. The five emerging trends that you identified – nanotechnology, food safety, by-products

of uranium mining, climate change, and demographics/urbanization – represent the collective wisdom of your committee and some serious concerns that will certainly come to light in the coming years. Your advice provides useful input as we form our views in planning for the conference. We will share this with our experts for additional feedback. We will also need to consider the potential value added by the CEC on such topics in light of their existing work and our own engagement in other international fora on such matters.

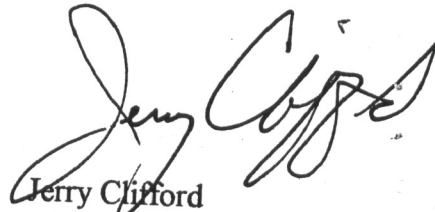
As explained at your October meeting, the Emerging Trends conference, along with the State of the Environment report, will help us identify the most important issues to address in our 2010 Strategic Plan. One of the challenges that we face for this plan is selecting projects and themes where the CEC can provide a unique contribution, and which can be addressed with the CEC's limited budget. Our goal for the 2010 Strategic Plan will be to create a streamlined, integrated CEC with an overarching theme or themes, and several key complementary issues that take advantage of the CEC's strengths. We welcome your advice and suggestions about themes and key issues that would achieve this.

Thank you for your advice on improving the format of the CEC Operational Plan. We agree with your advice and have shared it with the Secretariat as part of our U.S. comments on the plan. Given the timing, it was too late for the Secretariat to make some of these changes, and in some cases, other Parties' positions prevailed about the best way to frame the projects. We will ask the Secretariat to take your suggestions into as we begin plans for the Operational Plan in 2009.

Thank you for your advice regarding the concept of a CEC "eco-label," similar to EPA's EnergyStar. This concept has been considered in the past in the CEC, particularly within the North American Green Purchasing Initiative. When considering labels, it is important to note that there are different types of standards for different types of projects which might be considered environmentally preferable. Therefore, creating a North American "eco-label" could be an enormous task. We would like to note that CEC's new trade and environment project on Competitiveness and Sustainability aims to simultaneously enhance North American competitiveness and environmental performance, and may help to address the concerns you raised. In 2008, the project will focus on understanding the link between environmental sustainability and competitiveness, and will include development of a comprehensive report on the nature and value of good environmental policy and practices while maintaining or enhancing competitiveness in North America. We shared your advice on this matter with our trade experts, and they expressed interest in exploring this topic further with the experts on the NAC and GAC, perhaps at a future NAC and GAC meeting.

As you can see, your guidance is highly valued. We look forward to discussing these projects with you in more detail, and continuing to work together to strengthen the CEC as a catalyst for cooperative action, with relevance to United States constituencies and to North America. We look forward to seeing you at your Spring meeting.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jerry Clifford". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and a stylized "C".

Jerry Clifford
Alternate Representative for the
United States

cc: M. Dolores Wesson, Chair, U.S. National Advisory Committee
Irene Henriques, Chair, Joint Public Advisory Committee
Members of the U.S. Governmental Advisory Committee